



NEWS RELEASE

Release Number: 07

Release Date: February 18, 2005

JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF
CALIFORNIA
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
OF THE COURTS
Public Information Office
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102-3688
www.courtinfo.ca.gov

415-865-7740

Lynn Holton
Public Information Officer

More Funding Needed For Legal Aid Programs To Assist Low-Income Californians, Report Finds

San Francisco—At a public business meeting here today, the Judicial Council accepted a statewide report that urges the expansion of the \$10 million Equal Access Fund to meet the growing legal needs of low-income Californians.

The report concluded that while the Equal Access Fund has been a “tremendous success” in addressing serious legal needs of low-income residents, the fund must be significantly expanded to build on the state’s current statewide legal aid network.

It notes that only 28 percent of the legal needs of low-income Californians are being met, and that statewide, there are some 10,000 low-income people per legal aid attorney.

The report reviews how current funds are administered and concludes that more funding is also needed to expand the self-help projects that are now sponsored by courts and legal aid groups to benefit low-income residents.

By a unanimous vote, the 27-member council directed that the report be forwarded to the California Legislature. “Equal Access Fund: A Report of the California Legislature,” may be viewed online at <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/courtadmin/jc/documents/reports/0205item8.pdf>.

Court Reporting Services

The Judicial Council also received the final report of the Reporting of the Record Task Force, but did not take any action on any of the recommendations. The council requested that William C. Vickrey, Administrative Director of the Courts, refer the recommendations to the council's appropriate internal committees and staff for further consideration.

The report’s recommendations concern the uniformity of the transcript format; establishment of standardized word rates for transcript fees;

development of an online system to deliver, maintain, and sort electronic transcripts; statewide training for official court reporters; and clarification of the rules of court on paper transcripts for civil appeals.

Other Actions

In other actions, the Judicial Council:

- Approved the allocation of additional funding to the courts, which included discretionary monies as well as the remaining retirement and security funding from the Budget Act of 2004. These funds are being allocated to cover mandatory cost increases that are already being incurred but for which the courts were previously not funded.
- Approved the publication of revisions to the civil jury instructions that were first published September 2003 and last revised in October 2004. The instructions were added or revised to improve clarity and accuracy.

#

The Judicial Council is the policymaking body of the California courts, the largest court system in the nation. Under the leadership of the Chief Justice and in accordance with the California Constitution, the council is responsible for ensuring the consistent, independent, impartial, and accessible administration of justice. The Administrative Office of the Courts carries out the official actions of the council and promotes leadership and excellence in court administration.